

LETTER

FROM THE

POSTMASTER GENERAL, AND OTHER PAPERS,

RELATIVE TO

*Depredations on the mail in the Greenville district, South Carolina,
and the unfitness of the post office building at Greenville for that pur-
pose.*

MARCH 22, 1860.—Ordered to be printed.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
January 10, 1860.

SIR: I have to acknowledge the receipt from you of a "presentment of the grand jury of the United States for the district of South Carolina, at Greenville, in relation to depredations on the mail in that district, and the unfitness of the post office building at Greenville for that purpose."

This department has been, from time to time, within the last few months, advised of the depredations referred to, and has used all the means at its disposal for tracing and detecting them; but, as you are fully aware, Congress failed at its last session to make the usual and necessary appropriation for the service of this department, and it was thus left without the means of employing the service of such detective agents as were necessary for the due protection of the mails. I have, however, recently withdrawn one of the most experienced and efficient special agents, still in the service of the department, from pressing duties elsewhere, and have dispatched him to Greenville district, and the routes leading thereto, for the purpose of investigating the several cases of mail depredations which have been reported to this department from that section of the country. He will also be instructed to inspect and report upon the condition of the post office building at Greenville, which is presented by the grand jury as unfit and unsafe. I think it proper to state in this connection, that, under the existing regulations of this department, a post office building is not furnished, or the rent of one paid, for any office at which extra commissions (above \$2,000 per annum) do not accrue to an amount sufficient to cover such expense. It is, however, the duty of the postmaster to

provide a safe, convenient, and suitable building for the transaction of the business of his office,

I am, respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. HOLT,
Postmaster General.

Hon. D. L. YULEE,
*Chairman of the Senate Committee
on Post Offices and Post Roads.*

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
January 21, 1860.

SIR: I have, by direction of the Postmaster General, the honor to inclose herewith a copy of the report of Thomas P. Shallcross, Esq., special agent of this department, as to the detection and arrest of William M. McMahan, postmaster of Lavinda, Greenville district, South Carolina, who has committed numerous depredations on the mails of the United States within the last year. This arrest does *not* account for several large money losses which have been reported from South Carolina lately, and to which the attention of the agent is now directed.

I am, respectfully, your obedient servant,

B. N. CLEMENTS,
Chief Clerk.

Hon. D. L. YULEE,
Chairman, &c., United States Senate.

GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA,
January 15, 1860.

SIR: Having been informed by A. N. Zevely, Esq., Third Assistant Postmaster General, that many packages of stamps and stamped envelopes forwarded from the agencies of New York and Philadelphia to Fountain Inn, Dublin, Lickville, &c., in this district, had been lost from the mail on Thursday, the 5th instant, I proceeded to Philadelphia, and on Friday, the 6th, with Jesse Johnson, the stamp agent, there prepared four packages of stamps, one addressed to Fountain Inn, one to Dublin, one to Lickville, and one to Fairview, in this district, and had them regularly registered and mailed at Philadelphia for Richmond, Virginia, D. P. O. Mr. Zevely also caused a package of 500 three-cent stamped envelopes addressed to Fountain Inn to be forwarded to him from New York, and had them regularly registered and mailed at Washington for Richmond, D. P. O. All five of these packages I saw distributed and remailed at Richmond, on the 8th instant, by the postmaster there, and placed in the pouch, labelled to Columbia, South Carolina, under brass lock. I traveled with that pouch to Columbia and saw it delivered at the post office there. After

the mail had been separated at that office I saw all five of the packages in the pouch, made up at Columbia, for distribution by the route agent on the Columbia and Greenville railroad at Columbia. I procured the services of a young man who was acquainted with the agent on duty, and, after having given him a description of the packages, directed him to get into the mail car and see what disposition the route agent made of them, without intimating the object of his presence, which he did. Some twenty miles above Columbia, the young man came back to the car where I was and told me that he had seen all five of the packages put by the agent into the pouch made up by him for Greenville. That pouch I saw delivered at the post office here. On Friday morning, the 13th instant, at five o'clock, I opened the pouch made up here for the Laurens route, after it had been delivered to the contractor, and found all five of the packages there. Having procured a conveyance, I followed that mail, and after passing the first office on the route, Lavinda, I opened it again and found that all five of the packages were missing; I returned and obtained a warrant for the arrest of the postmaster at Lavinda, William M. McMahan, (not William C. McMahon, as appears in Post Office Directory,) and, on yesterday morning, the 14th, with the sheriff of this district, arrested him. In a small valise in his house I found all of the stamps and stamped envelopes which were in the five packages before referred to; and in another place in the house I found 675 three-cent stamped envelopes and a few stamps and several packages of letters mailed at and destined for other offices, which had been taken out of the mail on Friday, the day before.

McMahan stood as well as any man in this district. He owns a good farm, well improved, with good buildings, and owns nine likely negroes, and has money at interest.

His arrest has caused a great deal of excitement in his neighborhood, and in this town even, where he was regarded by every one who knew him as an honest, correct man. He is, I am sorry to say, a respected member of a Christian church.

I have ascertained where he sold some fifty dollars' worth of stamps and envelopes within the last year. He was examined before United States Commissioner Thurston, last evening, and committed to jail. An application was made for bail, which the commissioner intimated would be granted, and the amount fixed on to-morrow, Monday.

This detection and arrest explains, I think, all of the losses of stamps and envelopes (addressed to the aforementioned offices) reported to Mr. Zevely, as all of them would properly pass over this route. The stamps and envelopes which were used to test the route will, necessarily, have to be retained to be produced on the trial of the case. I would, therefore, respectfully suggest that a supply should be forwarded to the offices heretofore named, as they must be entirely out, not having received any for a year or more.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
THOMAS P. SHALLCROSS,
Special Agent, &c.

B. N. CLEMENTS, Esq., *Chief Clerk,*
Post Office Department, Washington, D. C.